CHAPTER 4

# THE JOINT COMMITTEE

On a parallel track, other events where also shaping the beginning of AFRS.

At the close of World War I, the War Department established a Morale Branch within the General Staff. Its mission: to coordinate the work of the civilian welfare agencies and others that influenced the morale of the Army. One was an education program financed initially by the YMCA, which provided classes for troops awaiting shipment home after the war. The War Department later transferred the YMCA officers into an organization known as the Army Education Corps. The Corps then set up an Education and Recreation program on military bases in the United States.

The Morale Branch began experimental studies and initial work that might have had important implications in the peacetime Armed Services. Unfortunately, the drastic curtailment of appropriations during the peacetime of the 1920's and 1930's limited any significant results. So, local commanders retained the primary responsibility for maintaining on-base troop morale.

Perhaps the only important contribution of the Morale Branch came from its Chief, Brigadier General E.L. Munson, who wrote a book entitled *Management of Men*. Despite the work's inadequate and insufficient evidence of social research, Munson was years ahead of his time in defining the impact of leadership and personnel management on troop morale. Yet, his ideas of the foundation of military morale fell into obscurity by 1939.

When Army Mobilization Regulation (MR) 1-10 dated October 21, 1939, appeared, it defined morale largely in terms of physical welfare, food, leaves, discipline, and recreation. It included directives intended "to set forth in detail those factors that have a decided influence on morale, to show how each of these factors should be dealt with in order to indicate the most suitable and practicable organization for the control and supervision of morale factors."(1)

The provisions of the MR 1-10 went into effect in July, 1940, establishing a Morale Division in the Adjutant General's Office. Its major sections included Army Motion Picture Service, Recreation and Welfare, War Department Exhibits, Decorations, and Morale Publicity. Although the title of "Morale Publicity Section" contained the implication of troop information, it served primarily as a minor public relations office for the War Department. It had no written responsibility nor intentions of expanding into either an education program or a program of indoctrination or orientation.

The Morale Division did, however, plan and begin the operations of a network of recreation facilities on each military installation in the United States and abroad.

The 1939 Mobilization Regulations also directed that the Secretary of War appoint a committee of civilian and military officials who were experts in welfare and community service activities. The committee's purpose was to advise the Secretary on the relationship between the activities of the Armed Services and those provided by other governmental and private agencies. Initiated in January, 1941, as an Army committee, it expanded in February to include Navy and Marine representatives with the title "Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation."

Secretary of War Henry Stimson selected Fredrick Osborn, a friend of President Franklin Roosevelt and Chairman of the Rockefeller Foundation, to head the committee. Osborn had originally come to Washington in August, 1940, to work as a "dollar a year man" in the U.S. Budget Office. President Roosevelt later appointed him the Chairman of the Selective Service Committee before Stimson tapped him to lead the work on troop welfare.

During the 1930's, Osborn devoted a large part of his time to studies in the social sciences besides his business interests. On occasion, he discussed the issues raised in his War Department Reports with Raymond Fosdick, the Department's morale expert. After his appointment, he convinced Fosdick to join the Joint Committee. Fosdick's addition to the committee provided a direct link with the studies of morale problems the Army had experienced after World War I.

Once the United States entered the war, the influence of these committee members was a key ingredient in the agency's ability to shape the morale activities of the Armed Forces. Besides Osborn and Fosdick, the committee initially included Clarence Dyhestra, then Director of the Selective Service; Robert Sherwood, the playwright and later Overseas Director for the Office of War Information; Charles Taft, son of the former President and later Director of the Office of Community War Services; Wayne Coy, Assistant Administrator of the Federal Security Agency; and Arthur Page, Vice President of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company and an authority on public relations.

Each of these men had a long-standing commitment to public service and a deep interest in the progress of the Army and Navy provisions for recreation and entertainment.

According to Francis Keppel, a 23-year-old freshman Dean at Harvard who came to Washington as the committee's secretary, the members all hoped that a

soldier's experience would provide mental as well as physical and moral benefits. To this end, the committee spent a considerable amount of time studying the problem and the current research on education and leadership. They received support from educators, the press and social science research groups, and from Army Secretary Stinson and Chief of Staff George C. Marshall.(2)

### THE USO

Ultimately, the committee concluded that the welfare of troops outside of army camps should be in the hands of a single group called the United Service Organization (USO). It was to be formed by the four private agencies who had worked in this area during World War I. In response to a request from the President, the committee prepared a formal recommendation from the Army and Navy on how to establish the new agency. Osborn, accompanied by General Marshall, hand carried the proposal to the White House. President Roosevelt read the report out loud to the assembled group. When he came to the part describing how the USO would be in charge of recreation and troop welfare outside military bases, Paul McNutt, then head of Health, Education, and Welfare, interrupted. "We've changed that," he said. "We've set up an organization in my department to do that."(3)

A heated discussion followed. Osborn stuck to the original recommendations that the USO should remain in private hands. So, the President became obviously pained at the noisy argument. As Osborn later recalled, Roosevelt suddenly relaxed and began to smile. He leaned forward and placed his hand on McNutt's shoulder. "Paul," he said, "if you do this you'll have a large staff and when the war is over you will have to fire them all. And, that would break your heart. I wouldn't have that happen to you for anything. We'll have the USO do it."(4)

Meanwhile, in February, 1941, seven months after the establishment of the AG Morale Division, General Marshall ordered the major commands to send their morale officers to Washington for a conference on troop morale issues. In preparing for the meeting, Marshall talked with Fosdick about the problems of World War I and consulted with General Munson about his book *Management of Men*.

By the time the conference convened on February 25th, Marshall had formulated his own ideas on an Army education and information program. He was aware of the necessity to keep soldiers interested in the work and the problems of restlessness in a peacetime Army still ill-equipped to fight.

However, the caliber of the officers that came to the conference didn't help Marshall find any solutions to these problems. Over half the officers had received their assignment within two days of their departure for Washington. Few of them had any professional training or experience in personnel management, welfare work, or recreation let alone the area of informing and educating troops. Many of them had no idea what their job involved and most had received kidding from their fellow officers about their assignment.(5)

The preparation for the conference and the sessions themselves made it clear that the War Department's existing machinery was not adequate to "enable the Chief of the Morale Division to know the state of morale of the Army." So, on March 14, 1941, the Army created the Morale Branch directly under the supervision of the Chief of Staff. The new agency received the mission of "the operation in the War Department of matters regarding recreation and welfare and all other morale matters not specifically charged to other War Department agencies. The chief of the Morale Branch will develop methods and procedures that will enable him at all times to know the state of morale of the Army," it said. "In accomplishing these missions he will conform to normal channels of command."(6)

General Marshall named Brigadier General James Ulio as Chief of the new Army Morale Branch collateral to his other duties as Assistant to the Adjutant General. The branch had four major divisions: Welfare and Recreation, Planning and Research, Public Relations, and Services.

Included in Public Relations was the responsibility for camp newspapers and camp radio reception. The initial organization contained foundations for future information and education activities. The initial activities involved the expansion of recreation facilities in the camps and the negotiations which formalized the creation of the USO. By then, Frederick Osborn's Joint Committee had moved into the War Department and he had a desk next to General Ulio.(7)

When General Ulio became ill in August, 1941, and had to leave the Morale Branch, General Marshall recommended commissioning Osborn as a Brigadier General and appointing him as Chief of the agency. There was much "soul-searching." Could he handle the job of a General without even "knowing how to salute?" With the "feeling that my civilian qualities would always be uppermost," Osborn took the assignment. His was one of the first War Department appointments of a civilian to rank of General Officer. As one can imagine, it created a considerable amount of comment in the press and within the Army itself.(8)

To Army officers, morale was a word of many meanings. It was all too often confused either with morals or drill field precision, but in either case, the responsibility

for morale rested on the commander in the field, not on a staff section in Washington. As a "civilian general," Osborn faced his task with a partly developed staff, a rather suspicious army, and, except for Munson's *Management of Men* and Fosdick's reports, little basic doctrine as a guide. Still, there was much to do.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor increased the problems - and the demands for solutions - beyond anything anticipated before December 7. Reflecting this, the Morale Branch changed its name to Special Services on January 15, 1942. It now included recreation responsibilities with those of information and education.

By June, 1942, the branch split into a Special Services Division in charge of recreation and welfare activities and an Information and Education Division. Osborn took over the I and E operation. He and General Marshall both believed that providing information and education to the troops was crucial to the war effort. Troops had to understand why they had to fight. Marshall recognized that the medium of film could be an excellent way to do that, so he arranged to have Academy Awarding-winning film director Frank Capra immediately transferred from the Signal Corps. He had commissioned him in February, into Brigadier General Osborn's Morale Branch.(9)

After meeting with Osborn in his office, Capra reported to Colonel E.L. Munson Jr., who was the head of the Information Services section, It handled news, radio, pamphlets and film. After introducing Capra to the organization, Munson asked him if he knew a man named Tom Lewis.

### TOM LEWIS

Yes. Capra knew Lewis both as the husband of actress Loretta Young and as Vice President in charge of radio production at Young and Rubicam, one of the country's major advertising agencies. Munson responded, "That's the man. We think he's the best candidate to head our radio section." Still recovering from his sudden transfer from the Signal Corps to Special Services, Capra threatened to tell Lewis to stay out of uniform to avoid becoming "another 'body' to be kicked around by some jerk superior."(10)

In an effort to calm Capra, Munson explained, "Frank, you know as well as we do that 'propaganda' is a dirty word to the American public. Congress has always been mistrustful of any 'managed' news, any so-called propaganda being fed to the captive audiences of millions of troops in uniform." The Army, on the other hand, believed that soldiers wanted to know why they were in uniform. "To tell them why," Munson said, the service was "going all out with modern communications media -- newsprint, radio, and film." Munson explained that to ensure bipartisan support for the operation, Frederick Osborn, a Republican, was heading Special Services. His aide then interrupted to add that Munson, a West Pointer, was in direct charge of Army information to make the operation "acceptable to mossback Army diehards."(11)

Once he understood his role, Capra asked Munson where Lewis fit in. Munson explained. "We're thinking of him for a job that would have scared off Hercules. We want a Superman who'll get up and run a worldwide radio service that'll be bigger than all our commercial radio companies put together. We want an airway hookup between the homefront and every military unit as small as a squad, in any part of the globe -- from pole to pole, from continent to continent, sea to sea. We want to send the news from home -- entertainment, shows with stars, comedians, girls, football games, baseball, Kentucky Derbies. We want to bring America's love to our sons and daughters, provide the forgetfulness for the wounded, the homesick and the despairing. We want them to know that we care!"(12)

Lewis was recommended for the job. Munson added, "setting up a globe-encompassing armed forces radio service is one of the toughest jobs ever offered to any one man. Like Columbus, he'll have to sail into unknown seas. Some very big and very smart men have insisted that Tom Lewis is our man. They say he's a genius in getting things done."

Munson had studied Lewis inside and out and did concur that he "*is* a genius." Being a genius was fine, but in such a job a person would also have to be "lucky." Munson asked Capra whether he thought Lewis was "lucky."

The director responded, "I don't know about Tom Lewis being lucky, but I know damn well that you, the Army, and the country will be lucky. You've got your man, fellows -- a man who asks God for help, and gets it."(13)

Meanwhile, Lewis had been exploring the possibilities of getting a commission in the Army or Navy. He had favored the Navy as a result of having visited the *USS Arizona* that summer. In the midst of his efforts to enlist, he received a request from the joint Army and Navy Committee. Now chaired by Walter Page, it asked for a plan for a global communications operation. Page wanted an information, orientation and entertainment radio organization for the U.S. troops, wherever they were in combat. Major Arthur Farlow, who delivered the request, had been the San Francisco representative of J. Walter Thompson Advertising Agency before joining the Army. He told Lewis that the Joint Committee was influenced by the range of his experience in broadcasting including local radio stations in Schenectady and Cleveland, his familiarity with the motion picture

industry and its leaders, and his work in audience research techniques.(14)

Major Farlow explained that the Army wanted Lewis to resign from his position at Young and Rubicam, enlist, and take on the operation. The Army promised him a commission to the rank of Major. Lewis accepted at once. Later, he acknowledged, "I wasn't quite certain at the moment how high or low in the order of things the rank of Major belonged, but it all sounded fine to me, the answer to prayer. I knew I could do it, it was so obviously the answer I had been seeking."(15)

Lewis resigned from Y & R and his position with Audience Research, Inc., the George Gallup subsidiary of the ad agency. Immediately, he began to work on the master plan for the Joint Committee. Lewis charted on world maps the places where the Armed Forces would likely to be fighting in the coming years. He planned the necessary coverage and made rough estimates of the huge quantities of equipment that they'd need --including long and shortwave transmitters and thousands of receivers. To handle the vast distances (and time zones) involved, Lewis determined that the agency would have to transmit its programs twenty-four hours a day.(16)

Studying the directives under which his organization would operate, Lewis determined what had to be created from scratch and what could be secured and adapted from material already being broadcast by the major networks. The Army would have to write and produce its own "education" and orientation programs. "Information" material could be retrieved from the same sources as that of the general public. For "entertainment" programs, Lewis' organization could combine radio networks' most popular programs with specially created troop-oriented material.(17)

Lewis needed to obtain priorities -- particularly in the civilian recording industry -- in order to staff the organization and to acquire equipment. Like other non-combat operations, he found himself in "backbreaking, soul-searching" competition for limited assets. Both the military and civilian officials with whom he worked thought all personnel and resources should be directed to the military combat effort.(18)

As soon as he received his commission on May 26, 1942, Tom Lewis went to Washington with his plans that the Joint Committee and his superiors accepted. Excited, he was anxious to implement them as quickly as possible.

As headquarters for the production operation, Lewis selected buildings first in the Taft Building on Hollywood and Vine. Later, they moved onto the old Twentieth Century Fox lot on Western Avenue in Hollywood -- the same location Capra had chosen for his offices. Faced with slow movement by the War Department and Congressional budget committees to approve the move, Lewis turned to Capra for advice.

"Just move into them anyway," Capra told him. "Don't ask questions. You have two choices if you want to accomplish the things we've been commissioned to do in this Army: take what you need and do what you must to get the job done -- or go crazy! There's no resigning or backing out in the Army, and who needs to go nuttier than we are? We were crazy to try to do this in the first place!"(19)

Lewis accepted the advice. He set up on the Fox lot and began putting his staff together, recruiting close friends from his radio work. These included an incredible team of professionals. True Boardman joined the staff on July 19, 1942, coming directly from the movie set of *The Arabian Nights* at Universal Studios. He would serve as Lewis' Executive Officer throughout the conflict. He and associate Austin "Pete" Peterson received commissions. Charles Vanda and Jerry Lawrence, CBS execs, entered the Army as enlisted men. Robert Lee was another talented Lewis associate from Young & Rubicam. He and Lawrence had formed a writing partnership in January, 1942, which endured for more than forty years. Together, they'd produced such wonderful plays as "Inherit The Wind," "Auntie Mame" and "First Tuesday In October."

Another contemporary, Al Scalpone, was exempt from active service, but came into the armed forces as a civilian employee at a fraction of his previous salary. When word got out, Tom Lewis received letters and phone calls from the best and most successful writers, producers, and technicians in the radio industry. They all wanted to get in on the ground floor.(20)

Not all the volunteers were exactly noble -- some of the applications were expecting draft notices any day. Some had already received orders for their draft examinations. Others were already in the service, but not in positions in which their creativity could be put to good use. Still others got in touch simply because they felt the need to help. Excepting those who were simply looking for soft berths, Lewis managed to get the key people into AFRS to build up his production staff.

At the same time, he established goals for the organization and procedures for accomplishing them. As a result, it was to take several months before AFRS began its own production of programs. During this time, "Command Performance" and the radio stations at Kodiak and Sitka continued to provide the sole military broadcasting for the troops.

The Radio Section had found their man. Tom Lewis would become the father of armed forces radio, then radio and television. Until his death a half-century later. Tom Lewis continued as the inspirational leader of AFRTS

## NOTES - CHAPTER 4

(1)Mobilization Regulations 1-10, October 21, 1939.
(2)Interview with Francis Keppel, March 6, 2984; Fredrick Osborn, *Voyage To A New World*, pp. 88-91; Francis Keppel, *Study of Information and Education Activities in World War II*, April 6, 1946, hereafter cited as Keppel, *Study*, pp 9-13.
(3)Osborn, pp 91-92.
(4)Ibid, p 92.
(5)Keppel, *Study*, p 14; Interview with Jack Pulwers, March 25, 1984.
(6)Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, Subject: *Creation of a separate branch for military morale*, March 3, 1941.
(7)Osborn, *Voyage To A New World*, p 92; Keppel, *Study*, pp 16-18.
(8)Osborn, p 92; Keppel, p 18.
(9)Frank Capra, *The Name Above The Title*, pp 351-354.
(10)Ibid, p 353.
(11)Ibid.
(12)Frank Capra, "Introduction" to Tom Lewis's unpublished autobiography, p vii, cited hereafter as *Lewis*.
(13)Ibid, pp vii - viii.
(14)Ibid, pp 283-284.
(15)Ibid, p 284.
(16)Ibid, p 285.
(17)Ibid.
(18)Ibid, pp 285-286.
(19)Ibid, pp 288-289.
(20)Ibid, p 291.